United Nations E/CN.17/2008/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 February 2008

Original: English

Commission on Sustainable Development
Sixteenth session
5-16 May 2008
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Thematic cluster for the implementation cycle 2008-2009 — review session

Partnerships for sustainable development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Partnerships for sustainable development are voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiatives undertaken by any combination of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and other organizations and institutions which contribute to expediting the implementation of intergovernmentally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments in Agenda 21 and/or the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The present report provides a general summary of information on the 334 partnerships for sustainable development registered with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development as at 1 February 2008, as well as a more detailed summary of partnerships focusing on agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development and sustainable development for Africa. In all, 95 registered partnerships of 334 have identified the thematic cluster for the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development as the primary focus of their work.

The report points out that while these initiatives vary significantly in terms of sustainable development issues addressed, management structures, number of partners and scope, there are certain factors that are common to all registered partnerships. Through the pooling of knowledge, skills and resources, these collaborative initiatives are working to find innovative solutions to sustainable development challenges and to develop knowledge networks to contribute to an environment of informed decision-making.

* E/CN.17/2008/1.

08-22962 (E) 290208

As requested by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session, this report serves as a basis for the Commission's discussion, during its review session, on the contribution of partnerships to the implementation of intergovernmentally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–7	3
II.	Partnership trends	8–29	4
	A. Overall numbers	9–10	4
	B. Sectoral coverage	11–15	4
	C. Geographical coverage	16–17	7
	D. Time frame	18–20	8
	E. Partners involved	21–25	10
	F. Resources	26–29	11
III.	Partnership implementation	30–40	13
	A. Implementation mechanisms	30–35	13
	B. Progress since initiation	36–40	14
IV.	Agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development and sustainable development for Africa	41–53	15
	A. Trends	43–45	15
	B. Implementation focus and implementation mechanisms	46–49	17
	C. Progress since initiation	50–53	20
V.	Partnership-related activities of the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development	54–70	22
	A. Online resources: partnerships website and database	57–61	22
	B. Networking opportunities: partnership fairs	62–66	23
	C. Publications	67–70	24
VI.	Conclusions	71–78	24

I. Introduction

1. Voluntary, multi-stakeholder partnerships working towards facilitating and expediting the implementation of sustainable development goals and commitments have proved to be an important complementary outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. As at 1 February 2008, a total of 334 such partnerships had voluntarily registered with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, of which 95 had indicated that the thematic cluster for the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development was the primary focus of their activities.

2. Partnerships for sustainable development have a special character; they are specifically linked to the implementation of globally agreed commitments in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), Agenda 21 and/or the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. However, as stressed at the Summit, these partnerships are not a substitute for Government responsibilities and commitments; they are intended to strengthen implementation by involving those relevant stakeholders that can make a contribution to sustainable development. Commitments by Governments remain the cornerstone of national, regional and global efforts to pursue sustainable development.

3. The Commission on Sustainable Development was designated by the Summit as the focal point for discussion on partnerships that promote sustainable development. At its eleventh session, in 2003, the Commission stressed that partnerships in the context of the Summit process and its follow-up should be developed and implemented in accordance with a set of agreed criteria and guidelines,[1] taking note of the preliminary work undertaken on partnerships during the preparatory process for the Summit, including the Bali guiding principles[2] and General Assembly resolution 56/76. Subsequently, the Assembly, in its resolutions 58/129, 60/215 and 62/211, and the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2003/61, recognized the important contribution of partnerships for sustainable development to the implementation of internationally agreed sustainable development commitments and goals and the continuing efforts of the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development to promote such partnerships.

4. The Commission agreed that information on partnerships for sustainable development should be made publicly available. As part of this information-sharing process, the Commission secretariat was requested to develop a partnerships website and database which would be accessible to all interested parties.

5. In February 2004, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat launched the Commission on Sustainable Development Partnerships for Sustainable Development website[3] and database.[4] The interactive web-accessible database contains information on registered partnerships based on voluntary self-reports from partnership focal points. These reports help keep the partnerships

[1] See E/CN.17/2003/6, chapter I, section A, draft resolution I, paras. 21-24.

[2] For the full text of the Bali guiding principles, see http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/prepcom4docs/bali_documents/annex_partnership.pdf.

[3] http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships.htm.

[4] http://esa.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/.

database up to date and form the basis for summary reports prepared by the Commission secretariat.

6. The Commission on Sustainable Development partnerships website and database were redesigned in 2006 and again in 2007 to improve navigation and facilitate access to the various new information resources and tools. New features added to the partnerships website include a partnerships events calendar; searchable listings of web links; publications and articles related to partnerships; simplified access to registration and updating procedures as well as partnerships news; and an online discussion forum (e-forum) where members of registered partnerships can network and exchange experiences.

7. During its biennial review sessions, the Commission will discuss the contribution of partnerships to the implementation of the intergovernmentally agreed sustainable development goals and objectives with a view to sharing lessons learned and best practices, as well as identifying and addressing problems, gaps and constraints. The present report, containing synthesized information on partnerships, as requested by the Commission at its eleventh session, is submitted for consideration by the Commission at its sixteenth session with the aim of facilitating those discussions.

II. Partnerships trends

8. Partnerships for sustainable development must have certain key characteristics (identified in the criteria and guidelines on partnerships set out at the eleventh session of the Commission, the Bali guiding principles and General Assembly resolution 56/76), including sectoral and geographical balance; multi-stakeholder involvement; a relationship to the World Summit on Sustainable Development; and a predictable and sustained resource base. The following sections explore some of these aspects and identify emerging trends within partnerships currently registered with the secretariat of the Commission.

A. Overall numbers

9. A total of 334 partnerships were registered with the secretariat as at 1 February 2008.

10. Nearly two thirds of those partnerships (209) registered around the time of the holding of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and 125 partnerships have registered since the Summit. Partnership registration increased by almost 60 per cent between 2002 and 2007, and new partnerships are continuing to register. In all, 207 partnerships participated in Commission on Sustainable Development partnership fair activities in the period from 2004 to 2007.

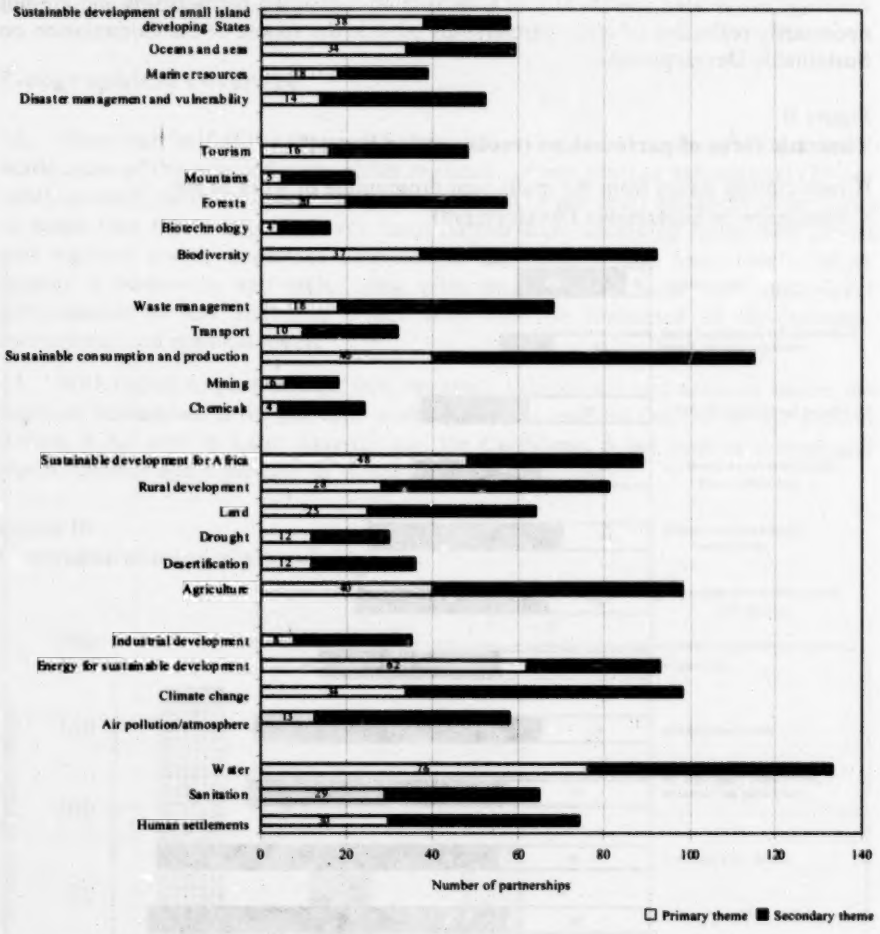
B. Sectoral coverage

11. The majority of partnerships working towards sustainable development tend to have a multisectoral approach to implementation. Figure I shows the distribution of the different thematic focal areas of partnerships, broken down by primary and secondary theme. To provide a contextual reference for partnership initiatives and

the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, thematic clusters from the Commission's multi-year programme of work were used to group the sustainable development issues.

Figure I
Thematic focus of partnerships registered with the Commission on Sustainable Development[a]

(Clustered according to the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development)



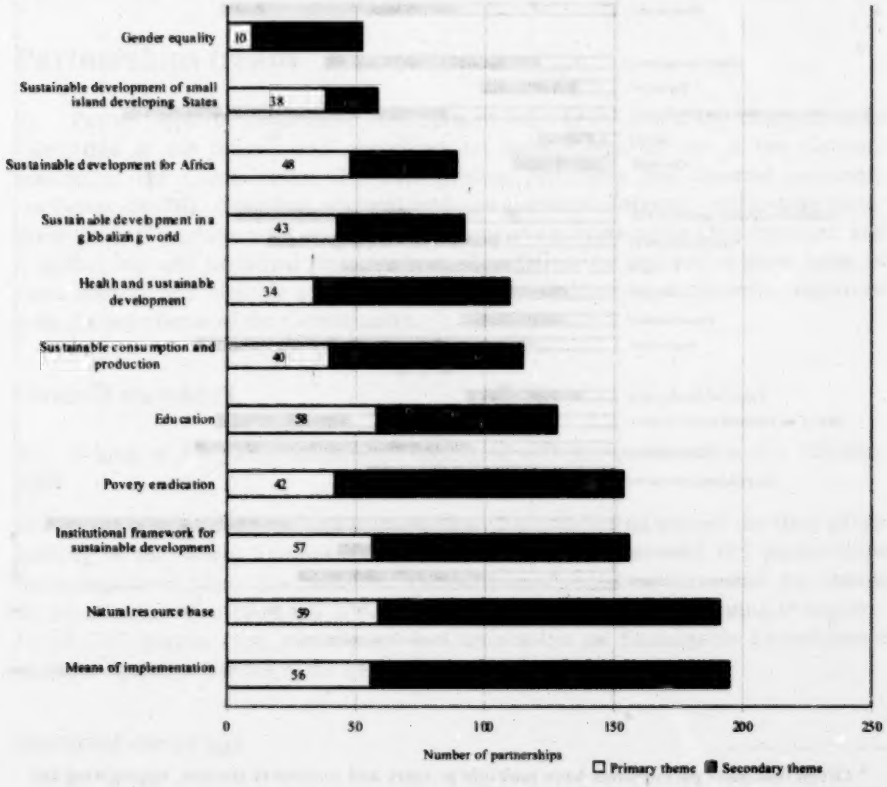
[a] Given that most partnerships have multiple primary and secondary themes, aggregating the number of partnerships per theme would exceed the total number of registered partnerships.

12. The thematic areas being addressed by registered partnerships cover a wide spectrum. More than half (53 per cent) of all registered partnerships are working in the broad area of protection and management of natural resources. More than one fifth of all registered partnerships are working in the areas of agriculture (28 per cent), biodiversity (27 per cent), climate change (28 per cent), energy (28 per cent), human settlements (22 per cent), rural development (23 per cent) and water (40 per cent).

13. On the other hand, some resource areas continue to have proportionately fewer registered partnerships: less than one tenth of registered partnerships cover biotechnology (5 per cent), chemicals (7 per cent), drought (8 per cent), mining (5 per cent), mountains (7 per cent) and transport (9 per cent). These gaps in coverage are related specifically to Commission-registered partnerships and are not necessarily reflective of other partnerships outside the sphere of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Figure II
Thematic focus of partnerships (cross-cutting issues)[a]

(Cross-cutting issues from the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development)



[a] Given that most partnerships have multiple primary and secondary themes, aggregating the number of partnerships per theme would exceed the total number of registered partnerships.

14. Cross-cutting sustainable development issue areas are taken into account by most partnerships (see figure II). Capacity-building and technology transfer continue to be key elements in implementation strategies, while effecting change in the institutional framework for sustainable development remains a priority area for 47 per cent of registered partnerships.

15. Sustainable development in a globalizing world (27 per cent) and sustainable development for Africa (26 per cent) are areas of concern for more than a quarter of all partnerships. One third of all registered partnerships are working in areas of education (37 per cent), health and sustainable development (32 per cent) and sustainable consumption and production (34 per cent). A total of 42 per cent are committed to poverty eradication.

C. Geographical coverage

16. More than half of the registered partnerships are global in scope (51 per cent), while most of the remainder are either regional (20 per cent) or subregional (23 per cent). A small number of partnerships are national (5 per cent) and local (1 per cent) in scope (see figure III). However, most partnerships, including those with global and regional scope, undertake activities at the national and local levels. Many employ a bottom-up approach, using pilot projects with local community-level participation to test strategies which may then be replicated at the national, subregional and regional levels.

17. With regard to partnerships with regional, subregional and national scope, the regional breakdown is 40 per cent working in Asia and the Pacific, 40 per cent in Africa, 8 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 8 per cent in Europe and North America and 4 per cent in Western Asia (see figure IV).

Figure III
Geographical scope of partnerships

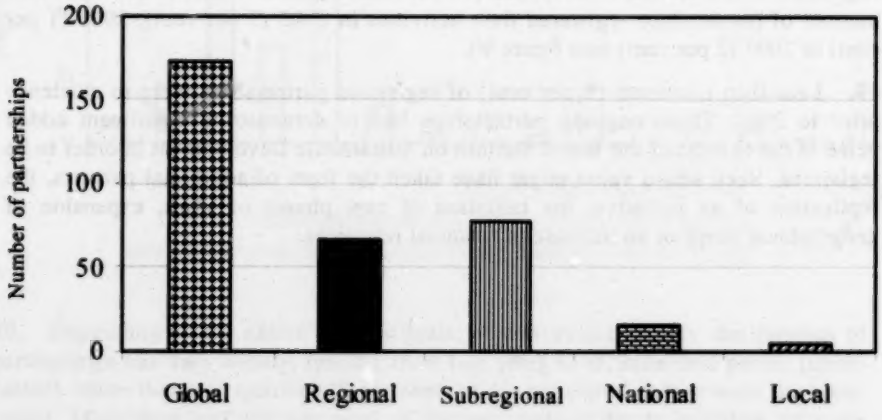
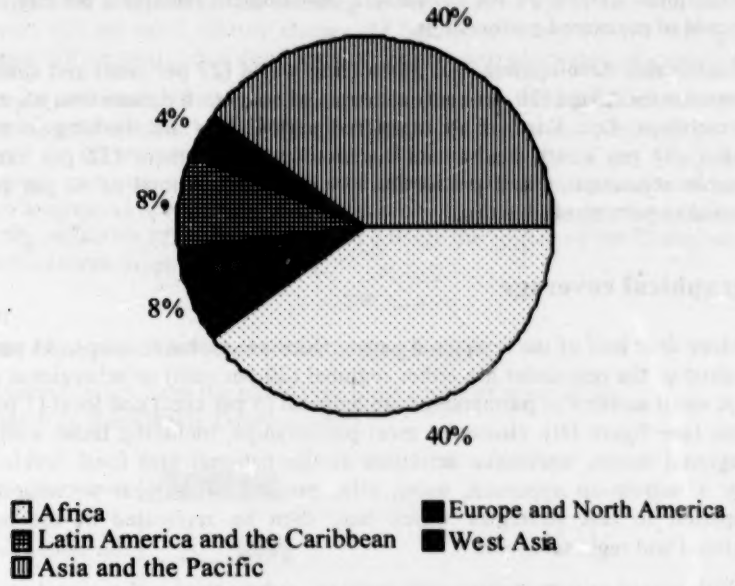


Figure IV
Regional coverage of partnerships



D. Time frame

18. The majority of the partnerships registered with the Commission secretariat were launched at or around the time of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. More than half (209) the registered partnerships were initiated in 2002, the year of the Summit. Less than one third (26 per cent) of the partnerships registered their activities in 2003, and (10 per cent) began activities in 2004. A small number of partnerships registered their activities in 2005 (3 per cent), 2006 (1 per cent) or 2007 (2 per cent) (see figure V).

19. Less than one tenth (8 per cent) of registered partnerships were in existence prior to 2002. These ongoing partnerships had to demonstrate significant added value in the context of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in order to be registered. Such added value might have taken the form of additional partners, the replication of an initiative, the initiation of new phases of work, expansion of geographical scope or an increase in financial resources.

Figure V
Year of partnership registration

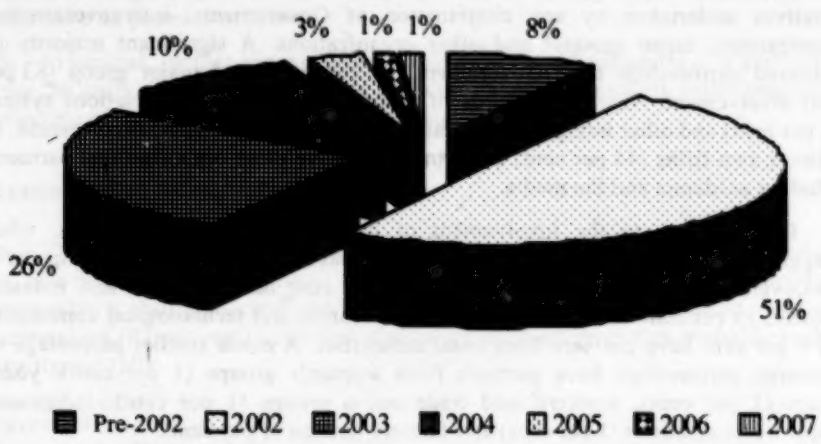
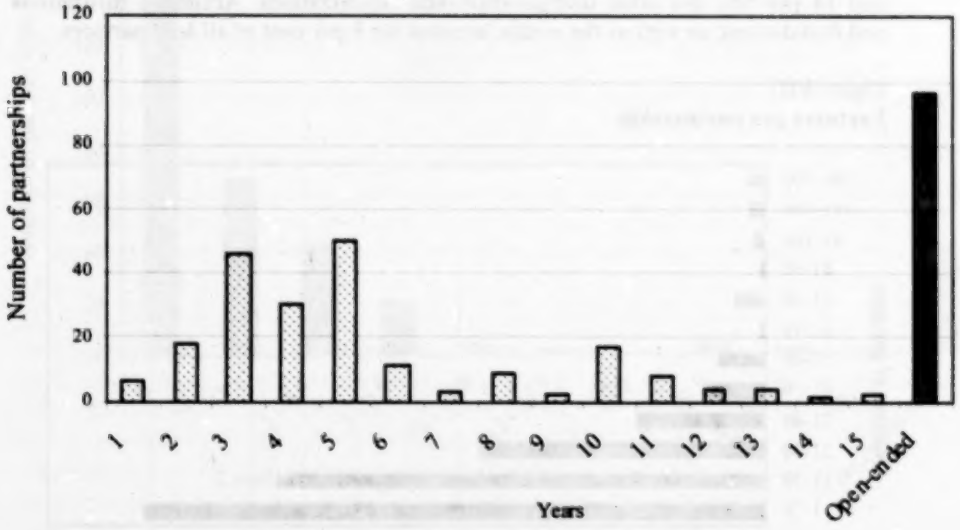


Figure VI
Duration of partnerships



20. Depending on the nature of their goals, objectives and targets, the duration of partnerships can vary widely, ranging from two years to an undefined period (open-ended). More than one quarter (28 per cent) of the registered partnerships are open-ended. More than half (58 per cent) of the partnerships list an end date 10 years hence or earlier (see figure VI).

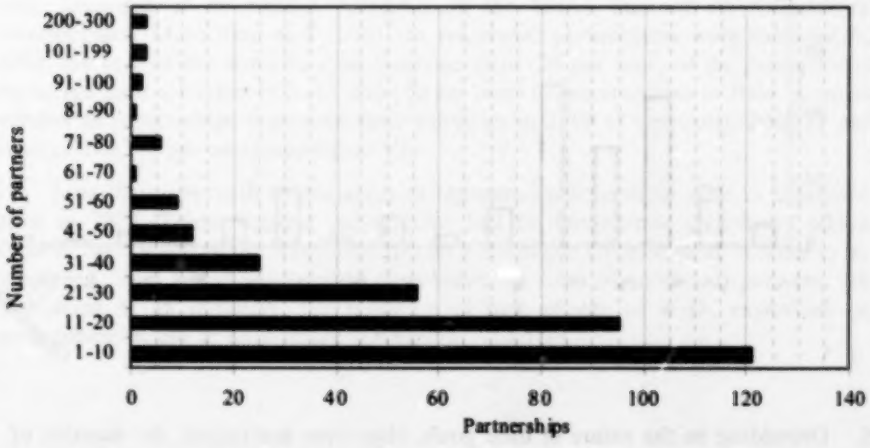
E. Partners involved

21. By definition, registered partnerships are voluntary multi-stakeholder initiatives undertaken by any combination of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups[5] and other organizations. A significant majority of registered partnerships have Government (83 per cent) and major group (83 per cent) involvement. Nearly two thirds of partnerships have United Nations system (62 per cent) and other intergovernmental organization (61 per cent) involvement. In addition, two fifths (44 per cent) of partnerships have other organizational partners, including academia and the media.

22. Data relating to the involvement of major groups in partnerships, when disaggregated by individual major group, show that 30 per cent of partnerships have non-governmental organization partners, 38 per cent have business and industry partners, 18 per cent have partners from the scientific and technological community and 9 per cent have partners from local authorities. A much smaller percentage of registered partnerships have partners from women's groups (1 per cent), youth groups (1 per cent), workers' and trade union groups (1 per cent), indigenous people's organizations (1 per cent) and farmers' groups (1 per cent).

23. In all, 481 lead partner organizations are listed for the 334 registered partnerships. Clearly, some partnerships have more than one lead partner organization. Of the lead partners, 33 per cent are major group organizations, 24 per cent are Government partners, 19 per cent are United Nations system organizations, and 14 per cent are other intergovernmental organizations. Academic institutions and foundations, as well as the media, account for 8 per cent of all lead partners.

Figure VII
Partners per partnership



[5] The nine major groups of civil society identified in Agenda 21 are: women, youth and children, indigenous people, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and Trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological community and Farmers.

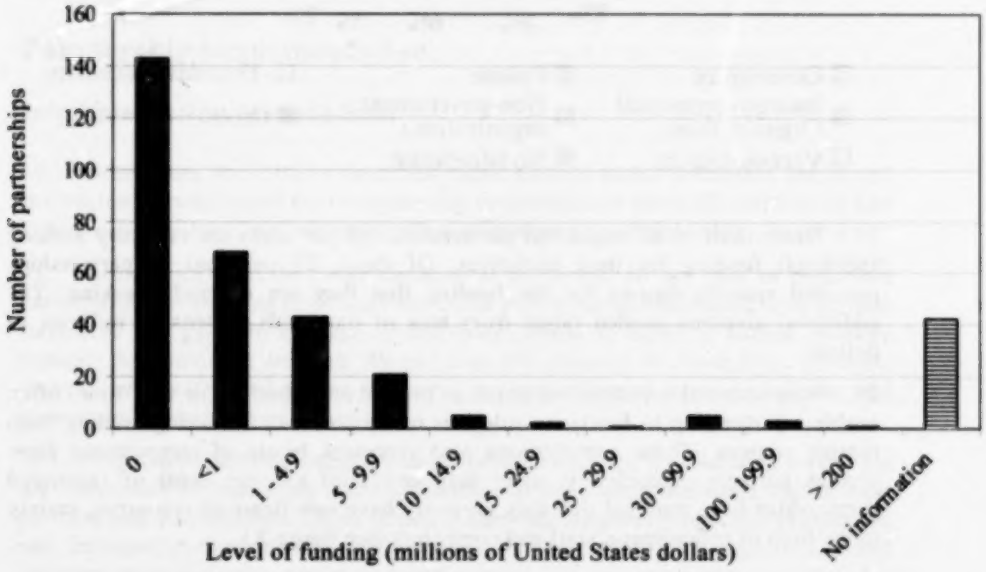
24. The number of partner organizations per partnership tends to vary (see figure VII). In registered partnerships, the number of confirmed partners ranged from 2 to as many as 232. However, a significant majority of partnerships (66 per cent) have 20 partners or fewer.

25. In general, partner organizations involved in the development of a partnership from the early stages ensure that the approach taken is genuinely participatory and reflective of the needs of the various stakeholders.

F. Resources

26. The resource base of a partnership, whether supported by financial resources or non-financial contributions, is one of the key determinants affecting a partnership's ability to carry out its activities. A significant number of registered partnerships (87 per cent) have provided information on resources available to them (see figure VIII).

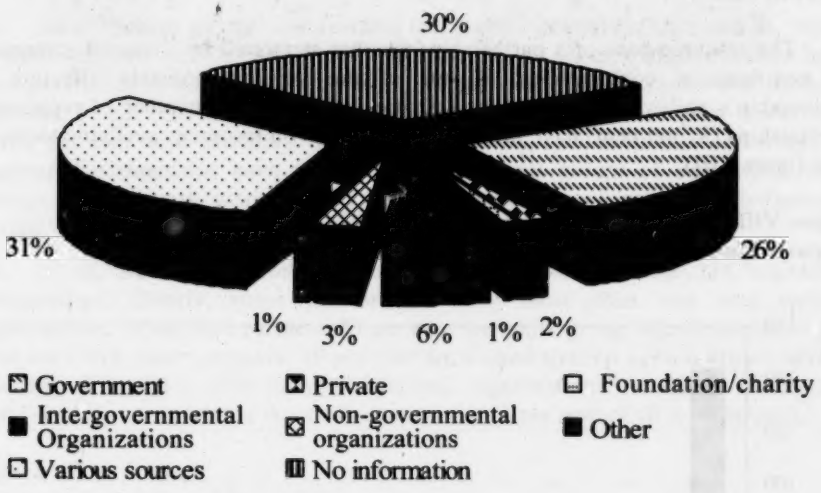
Figure VIII
Reported funding levels in partnerships



27. Based on the information reported, 44 per cent of registered partnerships (148) have secured financial resources, while 36 per cent (120) are supported by non-financial (in kind) contributions. A total of 292 (87 per cent) have provided information on the source of funding. It should be noted that many partnerships with secured funding have multiple donors. Of the 334 registered partnerships, 71 per cent have identified their donor type, with 26 per cent reporting receiving funding from Governments, 6 per cent receiving funding from intergovernmental

organizations (including United Nations system organizations), and 2 per cent receiving funding from private sector donors exclusively. One third of partnerships (32 per cent) are also recipients of funding from more than one source, including private sector resources. In addition, 3 per cent of partnerships have reported receiving grants from non-governmental organizations, while 1 per cent are receiving funding from other sources, such as foundations (see figure IX).

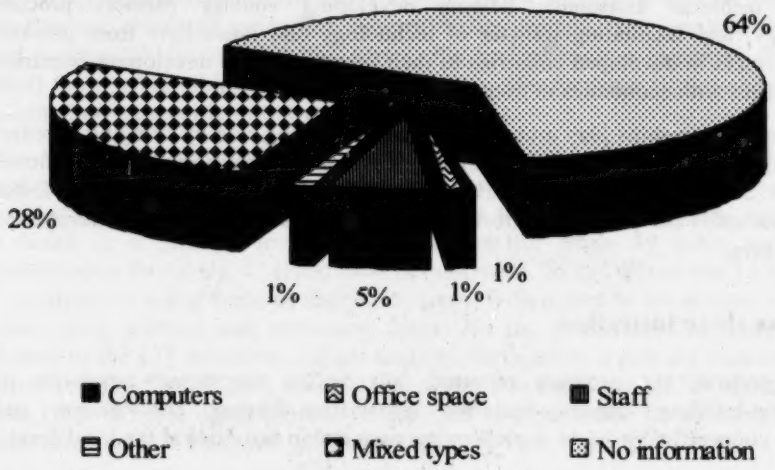
Figure IX
Types of funding



28. Nearly half of all registered partnerships (49 per cent) are currently seeking additional funding for their initiatives. Of these, 27 per cent of partnerships provided specific figures for the funding that they are currently seeking. The additional amounts needed range from tens of thousands to tens of millions of dollars.

29. Non-financial contributions (such as in-kind contributions or staff time) often enable a partnership to function while it is in the process of securing funding from outside sources. These contributions also represent levels of commitment from various partners. Specifically, more than one third (36 per cent) of registered partnerships have reported that they currently have non-financial resources, mainly in the form of office space, staff and computers (see figure X).

Figure X
Types of non-financial resources



III. Partnership implementation

A. Implementation mechanisms

30. Partnerships for sustainable development address global economic, social and environmental challenges by strengthening cooperation in areas of institutional and human capacity-building, research, information-sharing and technology transfer.

31. Partnerships work to foster capacity at all levels: 80 per cent of registered partnerships are working to educate and build awareness of sustainable development issues; 69 per cent are engaged in activities related to building human resource capacity by providing training; 49 per cent are engaged in some form of direct technology transfer; and 47 per cent carry out activities that focus on building and strengthening institutional capacity.

32. Partnerships actively engaging in advocacy, education and building awareness are committed to improving communication and knowledge exchange among their partners and stakeholders. These initiatives are utilizing web-based communication and information-dissemination platforms to collaborate on data collection, select indicator methodologies, report on best practices and propose models and tools for managing technologies and natural resources. The use of online tools enables communities geographically spread across the globe to collaborate and maintain information on common web spaces, take advantage of collective global expertise, identify cooperative research agendas and apply the relevant information to their local needs.

33. Most partnerships conduct national-level workshops and training sessions, which enable country-specific needs assessment to take place. Based on those assessments, partners are able to identify the political, technical, structural,

regulatory and financing barriers that need to be overcome in order to address specific sustainable development issues.

34. Technology transfer by registered partnerships mostly takes the form of targeted technical assistance; helping developing country partners procure technology; and facilitating transfer of technology and know-how from private-sector partners in developed countries to their counterparts in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

35. Many partnerships play a convening and facilitating role by bringing together and engaging key leaders and stakeholders in national legislation and international processes. Some partnerships are building institutional capacity by helping to foster new partnerships and providing information on project and funding opportunities to their partners.

B. Progress since initiation

36. In general, the progress reported falls within the broad categories of partnership-building; capacity-building; information-sharing; publications; and technical cooperation projects implementing partnership activities at the local level.

37. Partnership progress included reports of successful fund-raising; confirmation of additional partners; the development of organizational principles to define the terms of collaboration and cooperation among partners (including memorandums of understanding); and the development of an internal governance and coordination mechanism through the formation of steering committees and partnership secretariats. The identification of regional and national focal points as part of a partnership's coordination structure was also reported. In addition to coordination activities within partnerships, many partnerships have continued to develop formal collaborative arrangements with other partnerships active in similar complementary focal areas.

38. Capacity-building activities reported included the organization of conferences, workshops, symposiums and training sessions and the formation of expert networks.

39. The information-sharing activities most frequently mentioned included the establishment of partnership websites and newsletters, the publication of case studies, directories, educational and training materials and policy papers and the creation of toolkits. The creation of web portals/clearing-house mechanisms providing access to online tools, databases and software is another trend in partnership information-dissemination activities.

40. While most partnerships continue to work to create and maintain an effective organizational structure and focus on partnership and stakeholder relationship-building, these efforts appear to be taking place in parallel to on-the-ground implementation activities, pilot projects and research studies at the regional and country levels.

IV. Agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development and sustainable development for Africa

41. In keeping with the focus of the current review session of the Commission on the thematic cluster of agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development, and sustainable development for Africa, the present section examines in greater detail those partnerships whose primary focus is this thematic cluster and includes information on specific initiatives (see boxes I-IX).

42. Of the 334 registered partnerships, 95 initiatives have a primary focus on agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development and sustainable development for Africa, with some listing more than one primary area. Agriculture is listed as a primary focus by 40 partnerships, while 49 listed sustainable development for Africa, 27 listed rural development, 26 listed land and 12 indicated desertification and drought as their focal areas. With regard to the sectoral coverage totals (both primary and secondary focus) for the partnerships in this thematic cluster, of the 173 initiatives, 28 per cent (95) have either a primary or a secondary focus on agriculture, 27 per cent (90) on sustainable development for Africa, 23 per cent (78) on rural development, 19 per cent (64) on land, 10 per cent (35) on desertification and 9 per cent (29) on drought.

Box I

Competence Platform on Energy Crop and Agroforestry Systems for Arid and Semi-arid Ecosystems — Africa

The Competence Platform on Energy Crop and Agroforestry Systems for Arid and Semi-arid Ecosystems — Africa (COMPETE) aims to stimulate bioenergy implementation in Africa by establishing a platform for policy dialogue and capacity-building in the major multilateral and bilateral funding organizations and key stakeholders throughout the bioenergy provision and supply chains. Biomass energy produced on a sustainable basis provides opportunities to contribute to the fight against poverty, hunger, ill health, illiteracy and the continuing deterioration of ecosystems worldwide, especially in Africa. Since the start of the project in 2007, studies on current and improved land use have been under way for several African countries focusing on the sustainable provision of bioenergy. A seminar was held in São Paulo and Riberão Preto, Brazil, in October 2007 which included practical information exchanges (field trips), mainly for participants from Africa. COMPETE is currently engaged in overview studies on national and regional policies and strategies for sub-Saharan Africa in the field of energy crops, agroforestry systems and biofuels.

A. Trends

43. Given the degree of overlap among partnerships within this subset (see para. 42 above), the following general statistics are presented on an aggregated basis for all 173 registered partnerships active in the thematic cluster.

44. In terms of geographical coverage, 28 per cent of agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development and sustainable development for Africa partnerships are global, 9 per cent are regional, 10 per cent are subregional and 3 per cent are national.

45. In terms of time frame, 10 per cent of the partnerships within the thematic cluster for the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions were initiated prior to 2002, while 41 per cent were initiated in 2002, 29 per cent in 2003, 12 per cent in 2004, 3 per cent in 2005, 2 per cent in 2006 and 3 per cent in 2007. In terms of duration, 33 per cent are open-ended, while the remainder ranges from 3 to 16 years in length.

Box II
West Africa Water Initiative

The West Africa Water Initiative (WAWI) aims to address critical human health needs, poverty alleviation and sustainable development through better management of water resources. Its work is currently focused on rural and peri-urban communities in Ghana, Mali and the Nigeria in support of projects to improve the health and well-being of populations in those West African countries. Achievements include: approximately 1,131 wells drilled and close to 100 old systems rehabilitated, benefiting more than 500,000 people; more than 25,000 latrines constructed to enhance community and school sanitation; and 22 small water supply systems constructed and 131 school health and sanitation clubs established (the Niger).

In terms of lead partner involvement, 11 per cent of agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development and sustainable development for Africa partnerships benefit from Government input, 16 per cent from major groups participation and 8 per cent from United Nations system involvement, while 4 per cent involve other intergovernmental organizations and 5 per cent include other organizations, such as academic institutions. The remaining partnerships (129) are led by more than one partner. The number of partners within a partnership ranges from 2 to 251, with the majority of partnerships (89 per cent) having fewer than 50 partners. Of the 173 partnerships that list agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development and sustainable development for Africa as their primary and/or secondary focus, 82 per cent are composed of Governments, 82 per cent of major groups organizations, 58 per cent of organizations or agencies of the United Nations system, 57 per cent of other intergovernmental organizations and 50 per cent of academic organizations and foundations.

Box III
Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative: People Shaping their Sustainable Futures

The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative is a multi-stakeholder umbrella framework that engages civil society, Governments and intergovernmental organizations with a view to achieving concrete and measurable improvements in the livelihoods and living conditions of the rural poor and the sustainability of their environments. The Initiative is facilitated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations but led by civil society. Since its launch in 2002, the Initiative has aimed, inter alia, to improve access by the poor to critical resources for sustainable agriculture and rural development; and agro-ecological and ecosystem approaches; to ensure fairer and more decent conditions of employment in agriculture; and to encourage new ventures and strategic alliances to promote sustainable rural livelihoods and sustainable farming systems.

In terms of resources, 58 per cent of partnerships within the thematic cluster for the 16th and 17th sessions have already secured funding. In terms of future resources, 35 per cent of the partnerships in this thematic cluster are seeking additional funding. Nearly half (47 per cent) of the partnerships are currently utilizing non-financial resources. The breakdown of funding sources is as follows: 27 per cent of current funding is from Governments, 6 per cent from intergovernmental organizations, 2 per cent from private sector sources, 1 per cent from foundations, 4 per cent from non-governmental organizations and 1 per cent from other sources.

Box IV
Global Bioenergy Partnership

The Global Bioenergy Partnership aims to provide a mechanism for partners to organize, coordinate and implement targeted international research, development, demonstration and commercial activities related to the production, delivery, conversion and use of biomass for energy, with a particular focus on developing countries. Its initial targets included raising awareness and facilitating information exchange on bioenergy; studies and projects in bioenergy and trade, as well as bioenergy and sustainability; and methodologies for measuring greenhouse gas emission reductions resulting from the use of bioenergy.

B. Implementation focus and implementation mechanisms

46. The partnerships working in the areas of agriculture, desertification, drought, land, rural development and sustainable development for Africa are similar to the larger group of registered partnerships in that most of them include capacity-building activities in their implementation mechanisms. The majority (52 per cent)

include in their workplans an educational component aimed at raising awareness; 31 per cent are engaged in some form of technology transfer; 40 per cent provide training services to build human resources; and 29 per cent are working to strengthen institutional capacity.

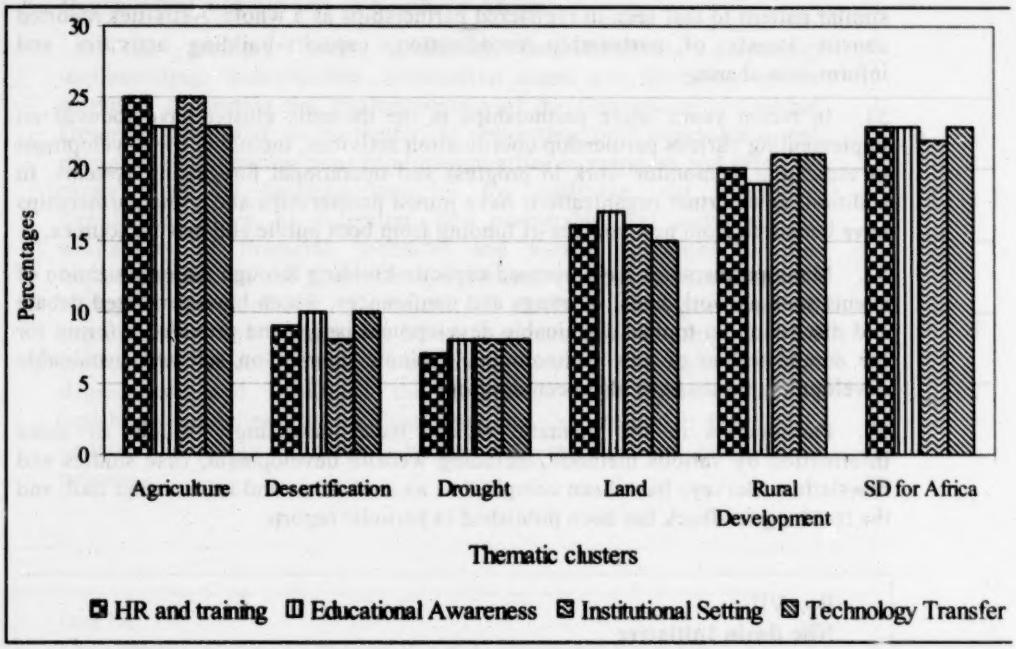
Box V
Education for Rural People

Education for Rural People seeks to build awareness about the importance of education for rural people as a crucial step towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education, gender equity and sustainable natural resources management. Since its launch in 2002, 307 partners have joined the initiative; five regional workshops were held on the theme of education for rural people; national strategies for education for rural people were formulated in Kosovo (Serbia) and South Africa; and a network on education and training for rural people was created with the participation of France. ERP has successfully promoted the alliance among the education and the agriculture and rural development sectors opening the door for revisiting the links between education and rural development at the public policymakers level and rethinking the constraints inherited from the traditional sectoral division of labour between ministries of education and agriculture.

47. A breakdown of the statistics indicates that approximately one quarter of the partnerships focusing on agriculture, rural development and sustainable development for Africa have implemented all four mechanisms, namely, educational awareness; institutional setting; technology transfer; and human resources and training.

48. In contrast, of the partnerships focusing on desertification and drought, less than one tenth of all partnerships have implemented all four mechanisms. On average, 16 per cent of partnerships focusing on land issues have implemented all four mechanisms (see figure XI).

Figure XI
Implementation mechanisms of partnerships: thematic cluster focus



49. Partnerships active in the thematic cluster are working to create global policy networks that promote dialogue and knowledge-sharing through the establishment of collaborative activities with organizations at the local, national, regional and global levels. These initiatives are working to build capacity and share information on issues as diverse as water management and conservation and tenure rights and land arrangements.

Box VI
Land Alliances for National Development

Land Alliances for National Development (LAND) Partnerships is a global initiative seeking to strengthen country-level collaboration among State institutions, civil society, international agencies and other key stakeholders to increase the secure access of the rural poor to natural resources, especially land, and enable them to participate directly in policy- and decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods. Since its launch in 2002, the partnership has been actively promoting LAND in the 35-plus countries where it has programmes. Initial pilot countries included Guatemala, Indonesia, the Philippines and South Africa. Participation by stakeholders in developing a common vision and framework forms the main foundation for the partnership.

C. Progress since initiation

50. The progress reported in partnerships within the thematic cluster follows a similar pattern to that seen in registered partnerships as a whole. Activities reported consist largely of partnership coordination, capacity-building activities and information-sharing.

51. In recent years, some partnerships in the thematic cluster have focused on implementing various partnership coordination activities, including the development of indicators to monitor work in progress and operational forecasting systems. In addition, new partner organizations have joined partnerships and some partnerships have benefited from new sources of funding from both public and private sources.

52. Many partnerships have pursued capacity-building through the organization of events such as workshops, meetings and conferences, which have generated debate and discussion on topical sustainable development issues and provided a forum for the demonstration of new technologies. Training courses on selected sustainable development issues have also been developed.

53. Partnerships in the thematic cluster have increasingly sought to share information by various methods, including website development, case studies and newsletters. Surveys have been compiled as an evaluation and information tool, and the resulting feedback has been published in periodic reports.

Box VII
Nile Basin Initiative

Launched by the Council of Ministers of Water Affairs of the Nile Basin States (sometimes referred to as the Nile Council of Ministers), the Initiative includes all Nile countries and seeks to sustainably develop the river in a cooperative manner, share substantial socio-economic benefits, develop an efficient water management system and promote regional peace and security. The arrangement now comprises an institutional framework, an agreement on the sharing of resources, a comprehensive development programme of Nile resources for the benefit of all and clear mechanisms on funding and partnership. A strategic action programme is now in place aimed at ensuring the equitable utilization of and benefit from the common Nile basin water resources.

Box VIII

Strategic Partnership for Mobilizing Civil Society to Combat Land Degradation and Poverty in Southern Africa

The partners have committed themselves to preparing, implementing, disseminating information about and following up on activities supporting the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, and, in particular, to combating land degradation and drought and enhancing poor rural communities in marginal and drought-prone areas by building capacity for resilience and improving livelihoods. Since its inception, this partnership has increased the availability of financial, technical and human resources for the implementation of the Convention; increased capacity within Southern African Development Community (SADC) non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations to improve the participation of communities in decisions relevant to drought and land degradation; and facilitated the production and dissemination of legislative guidelines for implementing the Convention in the SADC countries, developed through a participatory research and consultation process.

Box IX

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research Challenge Programme: Biofortified Crops for Improved Human Nutrition

The Biofortification Challenge Programme seeks to bring the full potential of agricultural and nutrition science and research to bear on the persistent problem of micronutrient malnutrition by breeding staple food crops that are rich in micronutrients, a process referred to as "biofortification". Micronutrient malnutrition, primarily the result of diets poor in bioavailable vitamins and minerals, affects more than half of the world's population, especially women and preschool children. The costs of these deficiencies in terms of lives lost, forgone economic growth and poor quality of life are staggering. To reach the Millennium Development Goal target of halving the proportion of undernourished people by 2015, new technologies and approaches are needed. The Programme focuses on three micronutrients that are widely recognized by the World Health Organization as limiting: iron, zinc, and vitamin A (beta-carotene). Full-time breeding programmes are proposed for six staple foods for which feasibility studies have already been completed and which are consumed by the majority of the world's poor in Africa, Asia and Latin America: rice, wheat, maize, cassava, sweet potatoes and common beans. Pre-breeding feasibility studies are proposed for 11 additional staples: bananas, barley, cowpeas, groundnuts, lentils, millet, pigeon peas, plantains, potatoes, sorghum and yams.

V. Partnership-related activities of the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development

54. The Commission secretariat gathers, promotes and disseminates information on registered partnerships that are implementing sustainable development around the world, facilitates discussions and offers opportunities for contributions to be showcased at the Commission's regular sessions. It bases its activities on the mandate of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the decision on partnerships taken at the eleventh session of the Commission, as well as on further guidance from the Commission.

55. The secretariat has been requested to make partnerships information, including voluntary reports, available to the widest audience possible through electronic and print media and activities such as the Commission's partnership fairs. The secretariat is also expected to produce summary reports, which contain synthesized information based on partnership submissions for consideration by the Commission, in accordance with its programme and organization of work.

56. Partnerships are encouraged, under the criteria and guidelines established at the eleventh session of the Commission, to exchange information with Governments and other stakeholders. As the guidelines promote transparency and accountability, each registered partnership is encouraged to report on its progress and activities biennially, and this information should be publicly announced. Reporting should be comprehensive and provide new information on all aspects of the partnership as well as focus on how partnerships have contributed to the implementation of internationally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments.

A. Online resources: partnerships website and database

57. In February 2004, the Commission secretariat launched the Commission on Sustainable Development Partnerships for Sustainable Development website and database. The interactive website is a valuable resource for sharing and gathering information on partnership-related activities and provides access to a wide array of tools and applications designed to promote knowledge-sharing and networking.

58. The partnerships website was further redesigned in March 2006 and February 2007 to add more relevant content, increase user-friendliness, improve navigation and enable easier access to partnership-related information resources. This online resource is aimed at assisting and facilitating the identification of partnership activities and contributions to implementation by making available a wide selection of practical information, including details about how to register new partnerships with the Commission secretariat, information on forthcoming partnership-related meetings and recent publications on registered partnerships and detailed guidelines and the programme of activities of Commission partnership fairs.[6] An online discussion forum has been created where members of registered partnerships can exchange experiences, lessons learned and best practices. All publications on registered partnerships produced by the secretariat are freely available to download at the partnerships website.

[6] These documents and several other online summary publications are available at the partnerships website, http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships.htm.

59. Information on the partnerships database is based solely on registered partnerships' voluntary self-reports from partnership focal points. Requests for updates are sent out annually; however, obtaining current information remains a challenge. Lead partners are urged to keep their information up to date in order for the database to remain relevant.

60. To date, the most frequently accessed section of the partnerships website has been the Partnerships for Sustainable Development database. Since its launch four years ago, the database has had a total of 259,162 visits. The number of visits has doubled every year since 2004, reaching 112,877 in 2007 alone.

61. The secretariat is working to build an online knowledge network on partnerships for sustainable development. It is hoped that the development of online tools that facilitate communication channels and information flow as well as promote learning and collaboration between registered partnerships will, in time, lead to the creation of online communities of practice among registered partnerships.

B. Networking opportunities: partnership fairs

62. In addition to using online resources, registered partnerships can present information on their activities at the annual partnership fairs and other partnership-related events organized by the Commission secretariat. These information-sharing activities help raise awareness and could lead to expansion in the form of new partners or the replication of successful initiatives.

63. The partnership fairs provide an opportunity for registered partnerships to showcase progress, network with existing and potential partners, create synergies between partnerships, share lessons learned and best practices and exchange experiences with a view to finding solutions to challenges such as mobilizing resources or partner retention. They provide a unique opportunity for partnerships to advertise and promote their efforts and activities to an intergovernmental forum.

64. Partnership fairs also provide Commission participants with an opportunity to gather information on, and discuss directly with partnership practitioners, the important contribution of the initiatives in providing support for the implementation of sustainable development. These sessions have greatly benefited from the participation of different stakeholders, including Government officials and representatives of national, regional and financial institutions, as well as civil society organizations, scientists and other experts, consumers and representatives of the private sector.

65. The sixteenth session partnership fair will take place from 5 to 16 May 2008 at Headquarters. Activities will include interactive discussion sessions on the theme of partnerships in practice; partnership presentations in which registered partnerships will update the Commission on progress made; and information desks where registered partnerships can display and distribute information.

66. To date, the partnership fair has been heralded as a useful and valuable session event, as is evidenced by the fact that 207 partnerships participated in partnership fair activities between 2004 and 2007 and by the interest it has generated among stakeholders over the years.

C. Publications

67. Key to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development secretariat partnerships team is the publication of reports providing comprehensive and up-to-date information on trends in implementing sustainable development through partnerships. In addition to publishing the reports of the Secretary-General on partnerships for sustainable development, the secretariat partnership team also publishes *Partnerships Wire*, a newsletter highlighting discussions during the partnership fair sessions, and background papers on partnerships, which are distributed widely and freely through the partnerships website.

68. Additional activities, such as workshops, seminars, expert group meetings and brokering initiatives, are being considered to offer further avenues for networking and enhanced stakeholder participation and to promote further the use of the partnership model.

69. The dissemination and sharing of information on partnership lessons learned, best practices and new ideas presents a unique opportunity for the membership of the Commission on Sustainable Development, partnerships and partnership practitioners to identify and address problems, gaps and constraints related to the implementation of sustainable development. This process also supports efforts to take stock and track the progress of ongoing partnerships, which is a key step in demonstrating the value and viability of the partnership model of implementation.

70. The Commission secretariat will continue to promote the valuable lessons learned from implementing sustainable development through partnerships. The sharing and dissemination of information on partnerships enables the Commission and the various stakeholders to ascertain what is and what is not working, find gaps, determine where initiatives can collaborate and where new initiatives are needed and identify underserved areas and niches. It also promotes a greater understanding of the usefulness of partnerships as an implementation tool towards realizing internationally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments, as well as encouraging opportunities for scaling up and replicability.

VI. Conclusion

71. The World Summit on Sustainable Development represented a major departure from previous United Nations conferences in many ways, particularly in terms of structure and outcomes. For the first time, negotiated outcome documents were complemented by the launch of more than 200 voluntary partnerships, providing an important mechanism to facilitate implementation.

72. In the years since the World Summit on Sustainable Development, partnerships for sustainable development launched at the Summit have continued to develop, grow and be consolidated. They have proved to be a useful and credible vehicle to effect change by catalysing Government action, engaging a wide range of stakeholders and creating new, innovative models for the implementation of sustainable development goals and commitments. At the same time, the initiatives are evolving by taking on new partners and building alliances with other partnerships working in complementary areas.

73. New partnerships have continued to be launched and registered with the Commission secretariat. By collaborating across all levels, pooling skills and resources and developing innovative policies and technical and financing solutions to overcome barriers to sustainable development, Commission partnerships continue to have an impact and make concrete contributions to the implementation of internationally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments.

74. Most important, partnerships continue to deliver results on the ground. They have contributed to improving the quality of implementation by involving those relevant stakeholders — Governments, civil society and the private sector — whose activities have a direct impact on sustainable development. The need to actively engage those actors in promoting and implementing sustainable development has become more pressing in view of the challenges resulting from an increasingly interdependent global world, thus making partnerships a useful vehicle to catalyse actions, resources and expertise that Governments and other stakeholders alone may not be able to assemble as efficiently and effectively.

75. Five years after the World Summit on Sustainable Development, there appears to be a growing acceptance that partnerships are now embedded in the international sustainable development dialogue and have become an integral part of the work of the United Nations system. Although partnering in the field of sustainable development is a relatively new approach to implementation, it is no longer a theoretical concept. As a dynamic implementation mechanism which has enriched the Commission's work, partnerships have become an important resource for relevant stakeholders, enabling them to get involved in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and for Commission participants, who appreciate the significant contribution of the initiatives.

76. At the same time, there is increasing recognition that the international community may be entering a new phase of dialogue which requires further efforts to advance and mainstream the partnership-based approach to development. There is a growing interest in building on the concrete added value that voluntary, multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives bring to the implementation of sustainable development goals, as well as in increasing efforts to further scale up and replicate partnership contributions and best practices. Concerns have also been raised about the need for partnerships to demonstrate greater effectiveness with a view to attracting new, additional and better-directed financial resources.

77. Expectations have also increased from a growing number of partnership stakeholders on the need for holding, in a timely manner, a third international forum on partnerships for sustainable development, which would provide an opportunity to take stock and address challenges and opportunities relating to the use of partnerships, further facilitate knowledge-sharing on experiences, lessons learned and best practices and discuss emerging possibilities.

78. Some important lessons have been learned by the use of partnerships since Johannesburg, as the following few examples can attest:

(a) *Increased recognition of the contribution of local actors*. More than half (51 per cent) of registered partnerships are global in scope, while the remainder are regional (20 per cent), subregional (23 per cent), national (5 per cent) or local (1 per cent) in scope. However, most partnerships, including those with global and regional scope, engage in activities at the national and local levels and hence have helped to

increase the participation of local communities. A partnership's effectiveness, impact and contribution is tested on the ground. Local intermediaries and implementers are essential for the success and sustainability of partnerships;

(b) *Increased effectiveness in development cooperation frameworks and enhancement of national sustainable development efforts*. A number of Government partners have utilized partnerships as an innovative approach to increasing effectiveness in their development cooperation frameworks. The partnership model has also been used to enhance national sustainable development strategies and policies and as a tool to harness relevant resources for their implementation. The effective use of partnerships could offer other developed and developing countries a more participatory approach, increased ownership and leadership, solidarity and mutual accountability in the design, implementation and evaluation of appropriate development initiatives and international cooperation frameworks;

(c) *Support for corporate social responsibility efforts*. Partnerships have served as useful tools for the promotion and facilitation of corporate social responsibility efforts by the private sector partners involved in these initiatives, which account for 38 per cent of the partners involved. Most of the registered partnerships with significant private sector partner involvement have identified, inter alia, increased visibility and credibility, knowledge exchange, environmental responsibility and further global impact as prime incentives for establishing their partnerships and registering with the Commission secretariat. These initiatives have experienced the value of applying sustainable development as a unifying concept and a guiding principle in their partnering efforts. Additionally, these partnerships have provided a platform for some companies to work together with other companies that would otherwise be their competitors;

(d) *Governments must continue to play an important role in fostering partnerships*. The complexity of the development challenges facing countries nowadays will continue to test the ability of Governments to muster the necessary resources and capacities to confront them. New types of cooperation and collective action across the traditional boundaries of public, private and civil society sectors are essential, since resources are usually scarce and dispersed among different sectors and actors. Thus, when used effectively, partnerships offer a viable, valuable and powerful development tool to support development objectives. Governments must continue to play an important role in the promotion and development of partnerships, allowing other stakeholders, such as business and civil society, to offer their expertise and contribute to delivering more effective development solutions.